

Modern-Day Gnosticism and sexuality: Rediscovering an Ancient Idea in Today's World

In recent years, ideas about identity, self-discovery, and who we truly are have changed rapidly. An old philosophy has quietly returned in these modern discussions: *Gnosticism*. Although it may seem unfamiliar, *Gnosticism's* ideas are showing up in today's culture, especially in movements focused on finding a hidden "true self" within each person. It's interesting to see how an ancient way of thinking is influencing our modern world.

Gnosticism was a belief system from the first few centuries after Jesus, built on the idea that the physical world isn't as real or good as a hidden, spiritual world. *Gnostics* thought that everyone has a "true self" that exists beyond the physical body, trapped within material limits. This way of thinking sees the physical body as less important than a deeper, invisible self.

Early Christians disagreed with *Gnosticism* because it treated the physical world as less valuable. Christianity teaches that the world is good, created with purpose. But *Gnosticism's* dualistic view divides everything into two parts: body versus spirit, or outward appearance versus inner truth. This has similarities to some ideas about identity today.

The Inner Search for "Who I Really Am"

A big part of *Gnostic* thinking that has resurfaced today is the belief that a person's "true self" is something they must find within, separate from the physical body. This belief is present in many modern identity movements that encourage people to "look inside" themselves to find who they truly are, often independent of physical or biological facts.

Ancient *Gnostics* thought discovering this hidden self led to freedom. Today, society often encourages people to look inward to find their real identity, even if it doesn't match their physical body. This search for an inner truth is very similar to *Gnostic* ideas of finding the "real you" that is separate from the outward body.

Gnosticism rejected the physical world, viewing it as an obstacle to be overcome. Similarly, today's society often treats identity as something flexible and self-created, rather than a reflection of reality. The idea that identity is purely personal and separate from the physical body feels like a modern form of *Gnostic* thinking. It's like saying that the body and the outside world don't matter; only the inner truth does.

While the search for identity and authenticity is important, this Gnostic way of thinking has some serious effects. When people reject the idea of any real foundation for identity, it can lead to confusion and even a lack of direction. For Gnostics, the material world was something to escape. Today, this same attitude might make people want to escape from physical realities—like their bodies—that are part of what makes them human.

This way of thinking can be especially challenging for young people. If children are encouraged to “discover” who they are from a very young age without guidance, it can leave them feeling lost or unsure. Identity then becomes something that is always shifting, which can be hard to manage in the long term.

The Gnostic view of “finding the inner self” goes against the Biblical idea that the body is good and has value. Where Gnosticism treats the body as a barrier, the Bible teaches that our physical selves are part of God's creation. Ignoring the body's importance in shaping who we are can be a big mistake.

Today, we often see this Gnostic-like idea in discussions about gender, where some believe the body is less important than one's self-perception. However, the Bible shows us that our bodies matter. Our bodies aren't just temporary shells hiding the “real” us but are valuable parts of our identity and purpose.

The Resurrection and the Value of the Whole Human

One of the most powerful counterpoints to Gnostic thinking is the resurrection itself, which emphasizes that salvation is not only about the soul but about the entire human being—body and spirit. In Gnosticism, the body is seen as something to escape, an obstacle to true identity. Yet, in the Christian story of salvation, the resurrection reveals something entirely different: that God values the body and considers it essential to who we are.

When Jesus rose from the dead, he didn't leave behind his body or transcend it. Instead, he came back as a whole person, physically recognizable to his disciples. This act confirmed that salvation cannot be defined without the physical body being raised from the dead. It shows us that the hope we have in salvation is a complete restoration—not of “the spirit”, but of our full, embodied selves.

If salvation were just about freeing our spirits from our bodies, as Gnosticism suggests, then the resurrection would be unnecessary. Instead, the resurrection points to the fact

that God's plan includes restoring us fully as humans, not as fragmented or dualistic beings. Our bodies are part of who we are, and in God's view, they are not disposable or merely shells. The resurrection affirms that our physical and spiritual selves are intertwined, each essential to our identity.

In this way, the resurrection speaks directly against Gnostic ideals. It tells us that the body is not a burden or a barrier to overcome but a sacred part of our identity that will be fully redeemed. Salvation, therefore, is a promise that we will be raised in a new, restored body—fully ourselves and fully human. This understanding brings us back to the heart of what it means to be human: not divided between spirit and body but whole, restored, and united in our identity as people made in God's image.

Embracing the Physical as Part of Our Humanity

Looking back at Gnosticism, we see that it left people searching for meaning but ultimately disregarded the value of being human. In today's age, where identity and self-discovery are highly valued, remembering the importance of our physical existence and connections with others can give us a more complete view of ourselves.

Modern Gnosticism can feel appealing, especially in a culture that prizes individuality. But if we want a well-rounded identity, we should look at both our inner beliefs and our physical world. By accepting that both body and soul have purpose, we find a richer, fuller way to understand who we are—connected, balanced, and complete.